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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to develop a rationale and position on how career education may be infused in the existing curriculum. As a district strategy for curriculum planning, the concept of career education requires a commitment of district leaders. An infusion strategy for career education could be based upon the following principles: (1) Educational leaders must be convinced of career education's value as a conceptual framework, (2) Career education should be integrated into the present curriculum, not treated as a separate additional program, (3) Career education should not be offered as a course, but rather in a unit approach, (4) Every teacher should be a career education teacher, which would require extensive inservice training, (5) Community involvement is an essential part of career education, and (6) Teacher involvement is important in the early planning and curriculum development efforts. (Author/AG)

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INFUSING CAREER EDUCATION IN THE CURRICULUM

by

Albert J. Pautler, Jr.[1]

Career education is a concept which has attracted a good deal of attention within recent years. A great amount of money has been spent on implementing so-called career education programs in many school systems in the United States. The money flow has come from a number of sources including the Federal government, the various departments of education within the states, as well as local school district funds. For those districts interested in career education the problem is how to do it within the existing educational and social structure of the schools. The intent of this paper is to develop a rationale and position on how career education may be infused in the existing curriculum.

As a start, it would seem that some operational definitions would have to be presented in order to define the terms, "career education" and "curriculum." This writer will use the Hoyt definition of career education. To Hoyt (1972) "career education is defined as the total effort of public education and the community aimed at helping all individuals to become familiar with the values of a work-oriented society, to integrate these values into their personal value systems, and to implement these values into their lives in such a way that work becomes possible, meaningful, and satisfying to each individual. (p. 1)" It should be made clear that many definitions of career education have been coined. If the Hoyt definition does not suit your district's purposes, choose one that does or search for another. The word, curriculum, means many different things to many people. The Inlow (1966) definition of curriculum will be used in this paper. To Inlow, "Curriculum will carry the connotation of the planned composite effort of any school to guide pupil learning toward predetermined learning outcomes. (p. 7)"

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This definition is similar to ones espoused, among others, by Doll (1964), Ragan (1953), and Saylor and Alexander (1954). The infusion of a concept of career education into the operational definition of curriculum of a district becomes a curriculum planning strategy.

The leadership within the school district would have to make some form of commitment to the pre-planning necessary in the establishment of a concept of career education within the existing curriculum. A number of basic questions would need to be answered before such a decision could be made by the educational leaders. Some typical questions would be as follows:

1. What is career education?
2. Of what value is career education?
3. What is the philosophical basis of career education?
4. Do we need a career education theme in our all-school program?
5. What are the objectives of career education?

The five questions are basic and would lead to a much more involved discussion regarding career education and its implications for the district. Such a discussion group would do well to note Miller's (1972) "Career Education Tenets" and use his seven basic tenets as a basis for further study (See Appendix).

The rationale for the infusion of a concept of career education into the curriculum must result after a basic study of such a concept has taken place. It would seem essential to gather as much information, both written and verbal, as possible about the concept before a decision is made. If we do it in any other manner, the concept might end up being treated like a unit on sex education or drug education. If this happens, all we have is another add-on to the existing curriculum. It is this writer's position that career education is not an add-on unit but rather a concept to be infused into the all-school program, the curriculum. The concept of career education should be built in so that the learners do not even know that such a process is taking place. Labeling a course or a program as a career education unit or experience will not result in a meaningful educational

experience for all children. The theme, career, will be confused with vocational or occupational and we again will be fighting the sin of intellectual snobbery as mentioned by the National Advisory Council on Vocational Education (1969) in its First Annual Report to Congress.

Such an infusion strategy might be based upon the following tenets:

1. The educational decision-makers of the district must be convinced of the value of such a concept of career education.

2. Career education should not be treated as an add-on to the existing curriculum. Every attempt should be made to infuse the concept into the operational curriculum that exists in the school and community.

3. Career education should not be offered as a course. It should be infused into the existing curricular structure within the school. This may be a "center of interest" or a "unit" approach method of curriculum development.

4. Our goal should be every teacher a career education teacher, rather than one or more teachers being identified as "career education" teachers. This will require a giant-size effort in terms of in-service education within our schools.

5. Community involvement as stated by Hoyt (1972) in his definition of career education would be an essential step in the infusion strategy. How will you attempt to involve your community in the developmental and operational aspects of the concept of career education. (Every attempt has been made to avoid the use of such words as program or course in connection with the term career education. It has been referred to as simply a concept of career education.)

6. The concept of career education will be most effectively infused in the curriculum if teachers are involved in the early planning for and curriculum development efforts that will be essential for such a concept.

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APPENDIX A

CAREER EDUCATION TENETS[1]

1. Career education is a comprehensive educational program focused on careers. It begins with the entry of the child into a formal school program and continues into the adult years.

2. Career education involves all students, regardless of their post-secondary plans.

3. Career education involves the entire school program and unites the schools, communities and employers in a cooperative educational venture.

4. Career education infuses the school program rather than provides a program of discrete career education curriculum "blocks."

5. Career education provides the student with information and experiences representing the entire world of work.

6. Career education supports the student from initial career awareness, to career exploration, career direction setting, career preparation and career placement; and provides for placement and follow-up including re-education if desired.

7. Career education is not a synonym for vocational education; but vocational education is an integral and important part of a total career education system.

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[1]Miller, Aaron J. "Career Education Tenets." Paper presented at the Sixth Annual National Vocational and Technical Teacher Education Seminar, October 24, 1972, Columbus, Ohio.